Ireland No. 13.]

THE TWO ALTERNATIVES,

OR

"WHAT IS COERCION?"

We are told that we must give Ireland Home Rule, because the only alternative is "coercion." What is this terrible alternative?

"**Coercion**" means force—in this case **enforcing,** or obliging the subjects of the Queen to obey, **the law of the land.**

Is there no coercion in England and Scotland? Yes; for Englishmen and Scotchmen are forced to pay their debts, are sent to prison for stealing, and other crimes, and are hanged for committing murder. These are all forms of "coercion." Why should not Irishmen also be forced to pay their debts, and be punished when they commit crime and outrage?

It is true that in the past both Liberal and Conservative Governments have resorted to objectionable forms of coercion —such as imprisoning men on suspicion, without trial. But no Liberal proposes now to repeat this mistake. Liberals who object to Home Rule only propose to maintain law and order in Ireland by methods of coercion which might be equally well applied to England and Scotland, without injuring any law-abiding man.

What are the provisions of the Crimes Act, which Mr. Gladstone himself in May, 1885, "deemed to be **both valuable and equitable,**" and by which Lord Spencer was able to restore and maintain law and order in Ireland during the years 1882—5?

This is how Mr. G. O. Trevelyan (Lord Spencer's Chief Secretary, and himself an ardent reformer and friend of liberty) described them to his Scotch constituents:—

"In last June, Mr. Gladstone and his Cabinet determined to

maintain the law in Ireland. They resolved to have a preliminary investigation on oath into undetected crime, which you have in Scotland. They resolved to have power of changing the scene of a trial from a locality where public feeling was too strong for that trial to be a fair one, a power which you have in Scotland. They resolved to call a special jury in cases of crime, as a substitute for the far more potent and effective system of convicting or acquitting by a majority of jurors, which you have in Scotland. They resolved to allow a summary sentence of a few months to be inflicted for crimes of violence and intimidation by two stipendiary magistrates, who answer in essential respects to your Scotch sheriffs. **That is Coercion!** That is the system, greatly effective as a check on crime, but **absolutely without any terror or danger to law-abiding citizens.**" (Mr. Trevelyan at Galashiels, May 7, 1886.)

Compare this coercion by law with the far worse forms of coercion practised by the Irish National League, with boycotting and outrage. How did Mr. Gladstone himself describe boycotting? :—

"'**Boycotting**' is combined **intimidation** made use of for the purpose of destroying the private liberty of choice **by fear of ruin and starvation.**" (Parliamentary Debates, May 24, 1882.)

If Ireland gets Home Rule the leaders of the National League, the authors of boycotting, will become the heads of the Irish Government.

These, then, are **the real alternatives**—not Home Rule or coercion; but **coercion by the Queen's law, or coercion by the law of the National League.** The former only destroys the liberty to do wrong; the latter destroys the liberty to do right.

Which shall we choose?

ORDER and LIBERTY,

OR

DISORDER and LICENCE?

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